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INSTITUTE OF TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERS

July 20, 1999

Magalie Roman Salas
Federal Communications Commission Secretary
Federal Communication Commission
Potals II
445 12th Street, SW
Suite TW-A325
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Secretary Salas:

Re: File No. NSD-L-99-24 and CC Docket No. 92-105

The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) respectfully submits these comments in response to the Public Notice issued by the Federal Communication Commission concerning the above-referenced Petition for Rulemaking filed by the United States Department of Transportation. ITE strongly supports the U.S. Department of Transportation's petition for a three-digit, national telephone number for traffic and traveler information services and urges its approval by the FCC.

ITE is an organization of 15,000 members in more than 85 countries. Over 11,500 ITE members practice their profession in the United States. Federal, state, local governments, private consultants, industry, and academia employ them. Their work spans the disciplines of planning, design, engineering, and operations. These professionals are responsible for the safe, efficient, and environmentally compatible movement of people and goods on our nation's streets, highways, and transit systems.

It is ITE's policy to promote and support the development and application of effective travel demand management (TDM) programs in the private and public sectors. ITE believes that implementation of a national three-digit telephone number for traffic and traveler information can become a major tool in the alleviation of traffic congestion through improved management of person and vehicle trip demand by altering the timing of travel to less-congested time periods. As such, the three-digit traffic and traveler information number will support energy conservation, air quality, and other environmental objective.

ITE believes that the traveling public would embrace the use of a three-digit traveler information system just as it has the 911 system that was established for emergency calls. For example, through most of 1996 and 1997 Ohio and Kentucky independently operated traveler information systems for telephone and cell phone users. In March of 1998, both states implemented a 211 system, after public education and awareness efforts these states saw a 91% increase in their systems use.

It also has been shown that when people call for traveler information they use it. An example of the importance of traffic information was the 1996 closure of the Central Freeway in San

Francisco. Due to the high percentage of people who were aware of this closure and the alternate routes available, the freeway was closed with virtually none of the anticipated congestion or confusion.

A national three-digit telephone number will make travel and traffic information available to everyone, regardless economic status, place of residence or means of travel. Many communities put a great deal of emphasis on reaching as many motorists as possible by whatever means available. Consideration is given to all mediums of transpiration that can accomplish this objective.

There is a clear public need for a national three-digit telephone number as three out of four household trips (one or more members of a household traveling together) within the United States were taken in personal use vehicles in 1995. Americans took about 505 million long-distance personal use vehicle trips, resulting in over 280 billion vehicle miles of travel on the nation's highways. The median round-trip distance for personal use vehicle trips was 368 miles. As Americans travel these 280 billion miles, most outside familiar surrounding, it seems clear that their safety and the efficiency of the nation's transportation infrastructure would benefit for a national three-digit telephone number.

ITE is aware of the extensive comments that the FCC has received in support of this concept and believes that they provide a wealth of information that provide a number of reasons and examples why the three-digit traffic and traveler information number is warranted. However, ITE would like to emphasize those comments the FCC received from the Intelligent Transportation Society of America (ITS America). This letter endorses ITS America's comments and ITE wishes to be associated with them.

In summation, the Institute of Transportation Engineers strongly supports the assigning of a three-digit telephone number that gives travelers, regardless of their proximity to home, access to traffic and traveler information. There is no doubt that this new tool will enhance the dissemination of traffic information and will contribute to efforts to mitigate congestion.

Sincerely,

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Thomas W. Brahms
Executive Director